



THE PHYSICIAN'S *Bookshelf*

POLICE DRUGS—Jean Rolin, translated by Laurence J. Bendit. Philosophical Library, New York, 1956. 194 pages, \$4.75.

This book is an impassioned argument against the use of drugs, especially the barbiturates, and more particularly thiopental sodium (pentothal sodium) in efforts by police to secure legal evidence from a suspect. In the Introduction he states that once these drugs "come to be used outside the psychiatric clinic, in connection with courts of law, become simply police drugs. The moment methods of investigating the unconscious pass from the strictly medical and therapeutic sphere into the forensic, these drugs become prostituted into means of extortion, turn the skill of the (medical) expert into the work of a policeman, and destroy all chance of true justice being meted out."

The first two chapters give a history of the development of scopolamine as an alleged "truth serum," and the warning which medical experts have made against this use and the development of barbiturates and amphetamine for psychiatric purposes and their effects on the central nervous system. As would be expected in a book by a layman, there are errors or misunderstandings concerning the chemical and pharmacological nature of the drugs discussed. For example, methylamphetamine is described as the dextro-rotary form of amphetamine.

The remaining six chapters give a history of police methods in obtaining or extorting confessions from the dark ages until the present. In Chapter 4 the case of Henri Cens was described. This unfortunate member of the French Police was accidentally shot in the frontoparietal, resulting in hemiplegia and aphasia. He was later accused of collaboration with the Germans in repressing the Resistance, but because of his aphasia was able neither to deny nor admit the accusation. Under thiopental he was reported to have uttered the one word "Oui" and therefore assumed to be malingering. Although eventually cleared of the accusation, Cens spent many months in prison, suffering from Jacksonian epilepsy, and repeatedly questioned by the police. The author over and over, with many repetitions of the idea in different guises and association points out "what an abuse torture is when used in search of a confession." He greatly fears the spread of authoritarian government by such means. "Pentothal is all the more to be feared in that it has come into a world in process of spiritual disintegration. The question of its use is identical with that of the safety of man in a dehumanized civilization." And again: "We are concerned with forensic medicine in a world already given over to power politics, to judicial systems which degrade. Inevitably, under these conditions, pentothal must become, if it is not already, one of a number of means open to the use of tyranny, whose claims are always increasing and whose methods, when exasperated, turn to pure savagery."

It is obvious that "pentothal" is simply a symbol used by the author in his crusade against what in the United

States of America would be called an invasion of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution. He decries the invasion of secrecy, the twisting of "privileged information" for uses of prosecution, the usurpation of the privileges of the bench by police methods. It is a book which should be read by medicolegal experts, attorneys, judges and police officials, as well as by everyone interested in maintaining personal freedom.

* * *

GYNECOLOGIC CANCER—Second Edition—James A. Corscaden, Ph.B., M.D., Professor Emeritus of Clinical Gynecology, College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, The Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, 1956. 546 pages, \$10.00.

Corscaden's "Gynecologic Cancer" is a comprehensive compilation of data concerning various forms of genital cancer. The author introduces the subject with a discussion of the frequency, probability of occurrence, accessibility and curability of cancer in general; here, the effect of delay of diagnosis on the chance of curability is discussed at length. He then proceeds to diagnostic methods describing standard procedures and working tools, pointing out the advantages of some over others and the shortcomings of some. Next, cancer of the vulva, vagina, cervix, corpus, chorion, fallopian tube and ovary are discussed sequentially and in great detail. Special attention has been given to the still incompletely solved problem of carcinoma-in-situ and the various approaches to its evaluation and treatment in the nonpregnant and pregnant states. The treatment of each type of cancer is discussed in detail and the advantages of certain types of technique are described briefly. Cancer of the cervix receives the author's particular attention. Here, as in the chapter on cancer of the endometrium, the principle of irradiation is taken up in great detail and in plain language, well documented and equally well illustrated. The author presents the end-results, reported by various clinics, without bias but does not hesitate to make recommendations on the basis of his own long experience.

Each chapter goes into the genesis of the individual type of malignancy in an attempt to clarify present controversies over genetic, endocrine and environmental influences. The concluding chapters, dealing with the menopause in relation to cancer, the general management of the cancer patient and a lucid discussion of the nature of cancer, form a fitting conclusion to this readable and informative tome.

The issuance of a second edition only four years after its original publication speaks well for the author's ability to reach the reading medical-public. The present edition has been augmented with recent information and additional tables and illustration and as such takes its place with other authoritative works on cancer. Corscaden's "Gynecologic Cancer" is profusely documented from the world's medical literature and, as such, a most valuable reference book. The publishers, the Williams & Wilkins Company of Baltimore, Maryland, as usual, have turned out a fine job of printing and bookbinding.